

United States Environmental Protection  
Agency (USEPA)

Radiological Background Study for Santa  
Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL)

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California Department of Toxic  
Substances Control (DTSC)  
Public Participation Group Meeting

July 27, 2011



# Agenda

1. Why Did EPA do a Radiological Background Study?
2. Purpose of the Study
3. How the Study was Designed and Conducted
4. Use of Statistical Evaluation to Determine Background Threshold Values(BTVs)
5. Summary of BTVs for Key Radionuclides
6. Management Decisions Impacting Future Clean up Decisions
7. Schedule and Development of Look-Up Table to be used to determine clean up at the SSFL



# Why EPA did the Radiological Background Study

- ▣ In 2008 Congress directed DOE and EPA to complete a comprehensive radiological study at Area IV of SSFL
- ▣ In 2008 and 2009 DOE gave EPA funding to complete the radiological study independently
- ▣ The radiological background study is a key part of the comprehensive on-site study as the results from on-site soil sampling will be compared to background soil results to determine what should be cleaned up



# Radiological Background Study Objectives

- ▣ The purpose of the Background Study is to determine the level of “ambient or background” radioactivity found in soil.
- ▣ The Background Study Report will be used in part to assist the State of CA in developing Clean-Up Values for the Look-Up Table as required by the Administrative Order on Consent (AOC). DOE, NASA and DTSC are parties to this AOC.

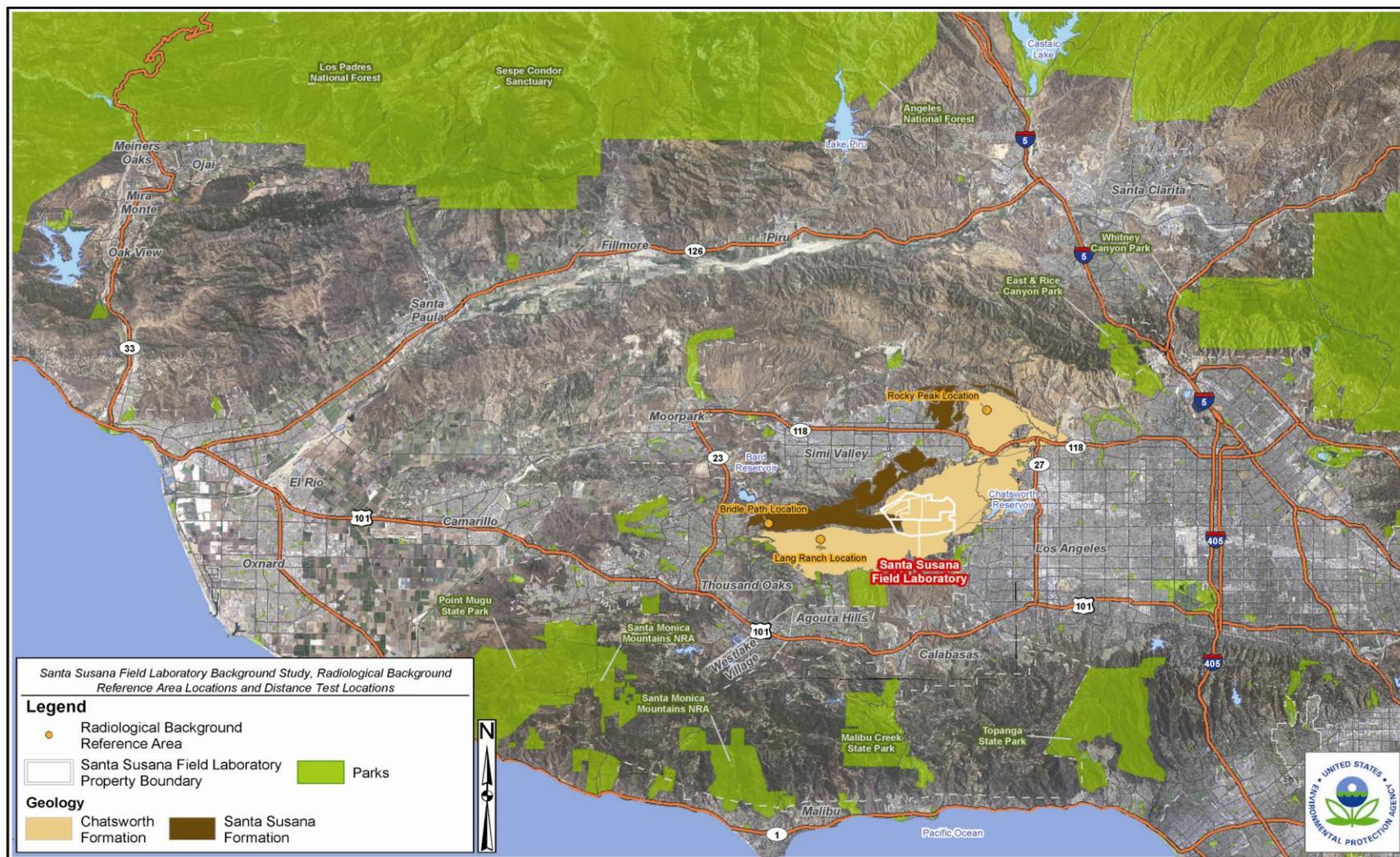


# Background Locations Evaluation and Selection

- ❑ Conducted with considerable assistance from community members
- ❑ Initially, over 200 locations in seven general areas were identified and considered
- ❑ Eleven locations were evaluated
- ❑ Three locations were selected for background sampling
- ❑ These areas are referred to as Radiological Background Reference Areas (RBRAs)



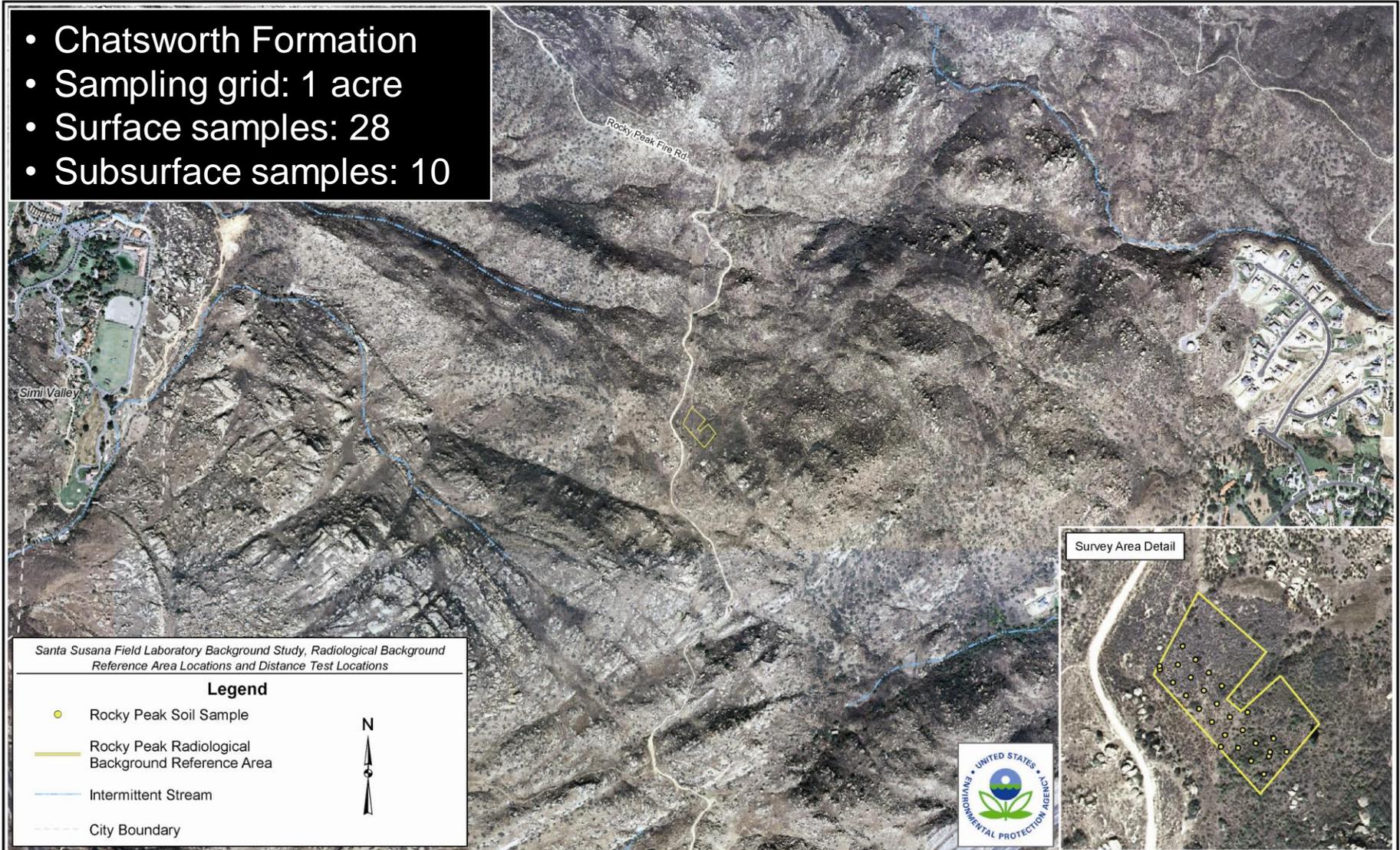
# Radiological Background Reference Areas (RBRAs)



# Rocky Peak RBRA

## Rocky Peak Radiological Background Reference Area Sampling Grid

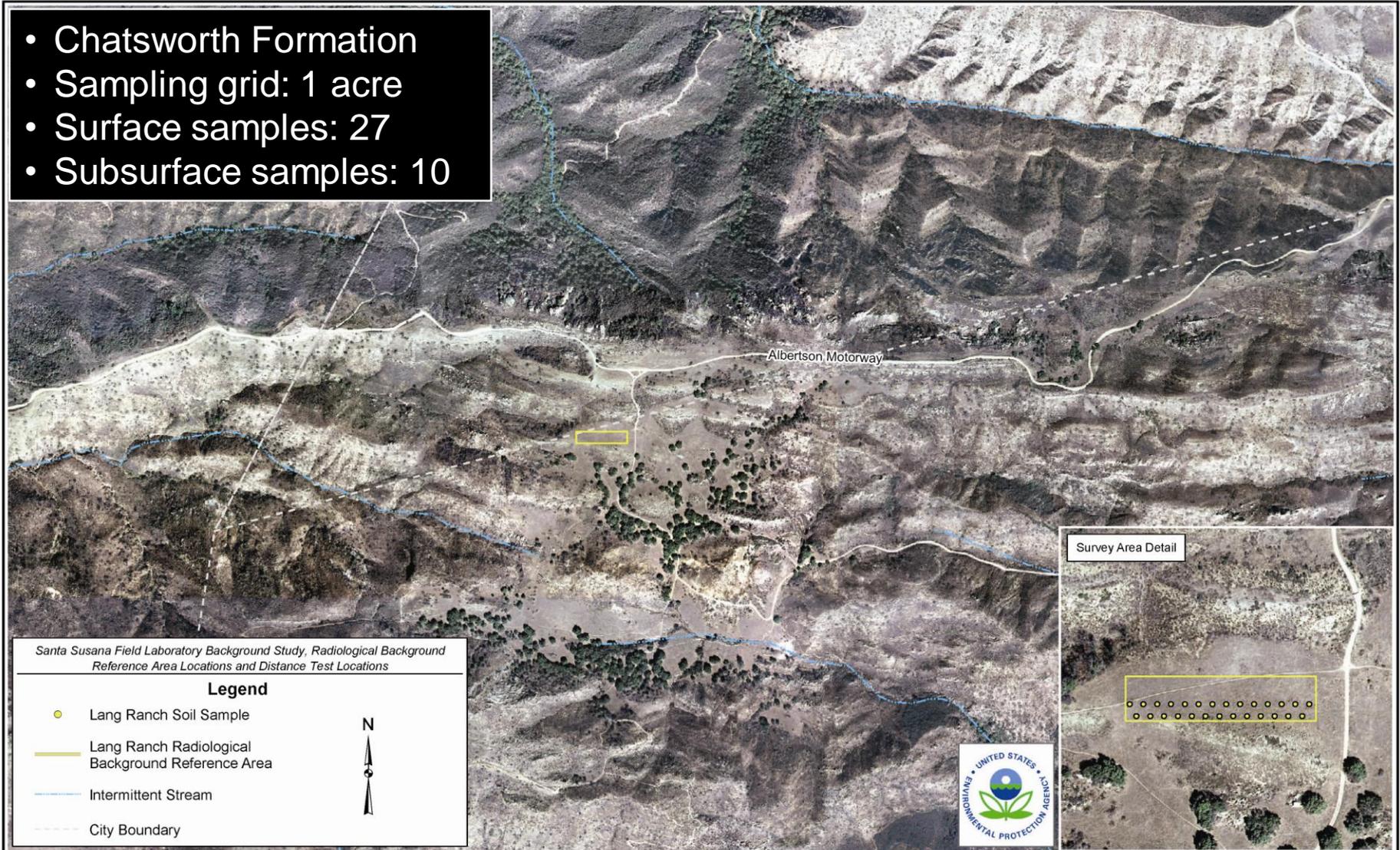
- Chatsworth Formation
- Sampling grid: 1 acre
- Surface samples: 28
- Subsurface samples: 10



# Lang Ranch RBRA

## Lang Ranch Radiological Background Reference Area Conceptual Sampling Grid

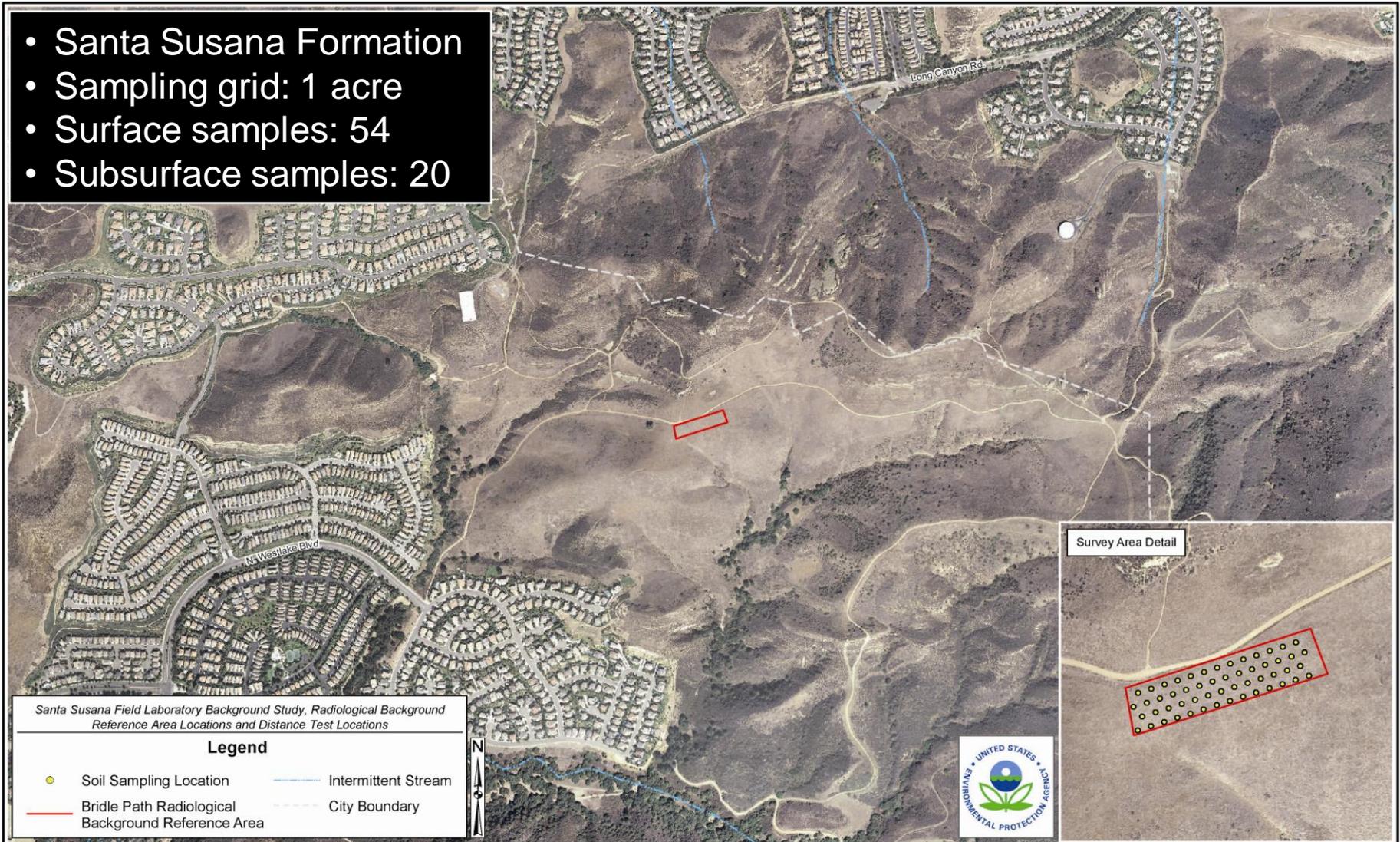
- Chatsworth Formation
- Sampling grid: 1 acre
- Surface samples: 27
- Subsurface samples: 10



# Bridle Path RBRA

## Bridle Path Radiological Background Reference Area Sampling Grid

- Santa Susana Formation
- Sampling grid: 1 acre
- Surface samples: 54
- Subsurface samples: 20

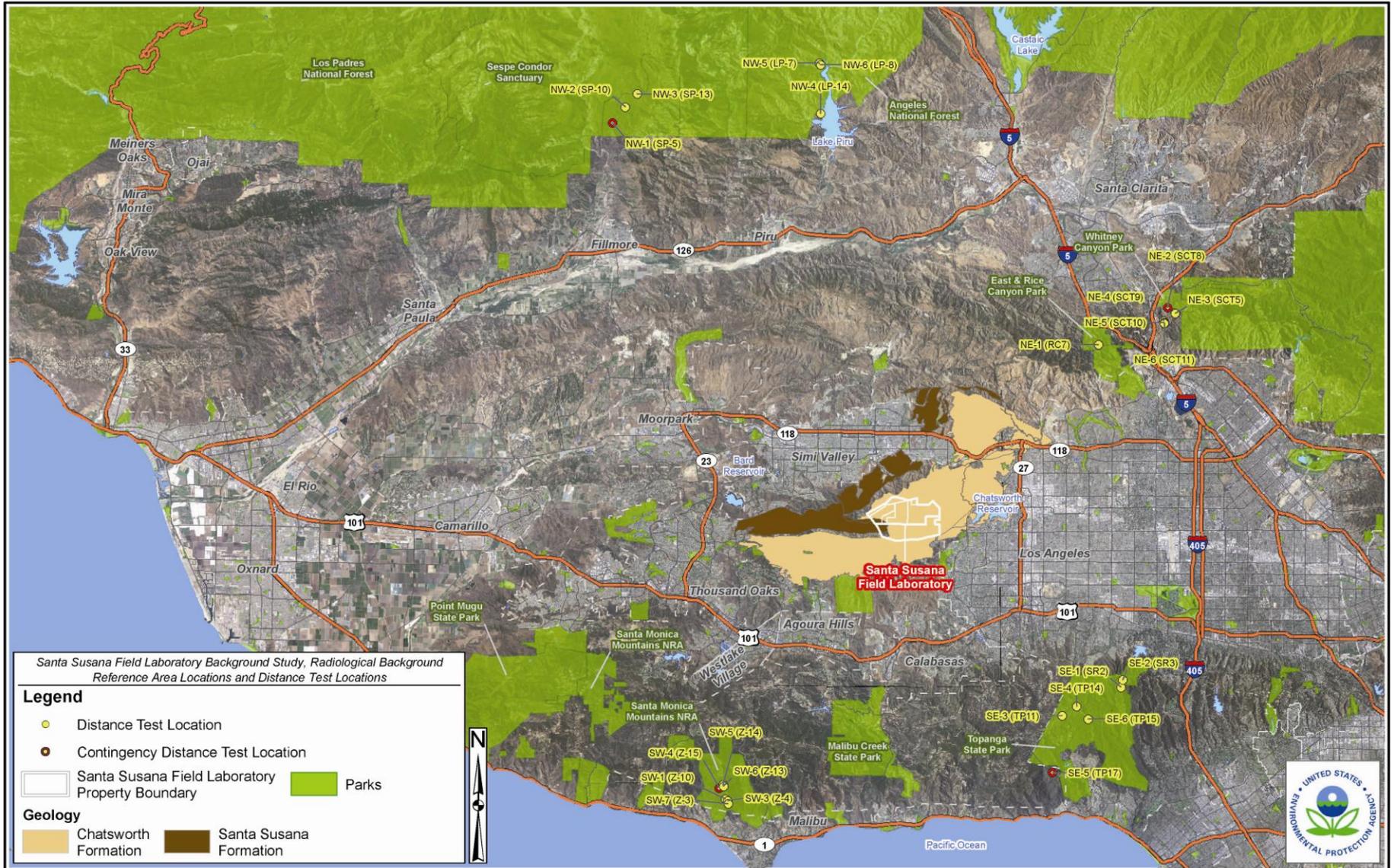


# Distance Test Locations (DTLs)

- ▣ Address concern that the three RBRAs were too close to the SSFL
- ▣ Collected 24 surface soil samples at distances at least 10 miles from the SSFL
- ▣ Compared sampling results to ensure that the three RBRAs were not contaminated by the SSFL



# Distance Test Locations



# Radionuclides Tested

## DISTANCE TEST LOCATIONS

- ▣ Cesium-137
- ▣ Cobalt-60
- ▣ Plutonium-238
- ▣ Plutonium-  
239/240
- ▣ Strontium-90

## RAD BACKGROUND REFERENCE AREAS

- ▣ All radionuclides at the DTLs and over 60 more



# Develop Background Threshold Values (BTVs)

## Comparison of RBRAs to DTLs

- ▣ Look at data distribution and identify outliers.
- ▣ In order to determine if the RBRAs are representative of “Background” soils, the analytical data from the RBRAs was compared to the analytical data from the DTLs.
- ▣ Since the analytical data from the RBRAs was comparable to the analytical data from the DTLs, then the RBRAs can be considered “Background Locations”.



# Develop BTVs

## Determining if Individual Data Sets can be Merged

- There are six individual data sets.
  1. **Lang Ranch**
    - Surface and subsurface
  2. **Rocky Peak**
    - Surface and subsurface
  3. **Bridle Path**
    - Surface and subsurface
  
- All these data sets were statistically compared to each other to determine if they are similar enough to be merged together.



# Background Threshold Values

- ▣ Once the applicable data sets were determined, BTVs were calculated.
  
- ▣ Chose the best statistic to represent the BTV
  - ▣ Did a statistical evaluation of each data set to calculate a number that represents many values
    - 95% Upper Simultaneous Limit (USL95)



# Summary of Overall Radionuclide Results

- Eleven (11) radionuclides exhibited fewer than 5 detections in the background study samples.
  - Due to the low number of detections, any statistical evaluation of the data of these radionuclides is suspect. A number such as the detection limit may be used in the Look-Up Table.
  
- Fifty-three (53) radionuclides analyzed for the SSFL Background Study exhibited greater than or equal to 5 detections.
  - For these 53 radionuclides, a background threshold values were calculated using the Upper Simultaneous Limit statistic.



# Summary of the Analyte Classifications from the Background Study Data

1. Radionuclides with less than 5 detections
2. Radionuclides with greater or equal to 5 detections
  - Radionuclides with one BTV from combined data
  - Radionuclides Exhibiting Differences Between Surface Soil and Subsurface Soil
  - Radionuclides Exhibiting Differences Between Geologic Formations
  - Radionuclides Exhibiting Variability Between RBRAs and Datasets
3. Rejected Results(Total of 4)
  - Due to spectral interference

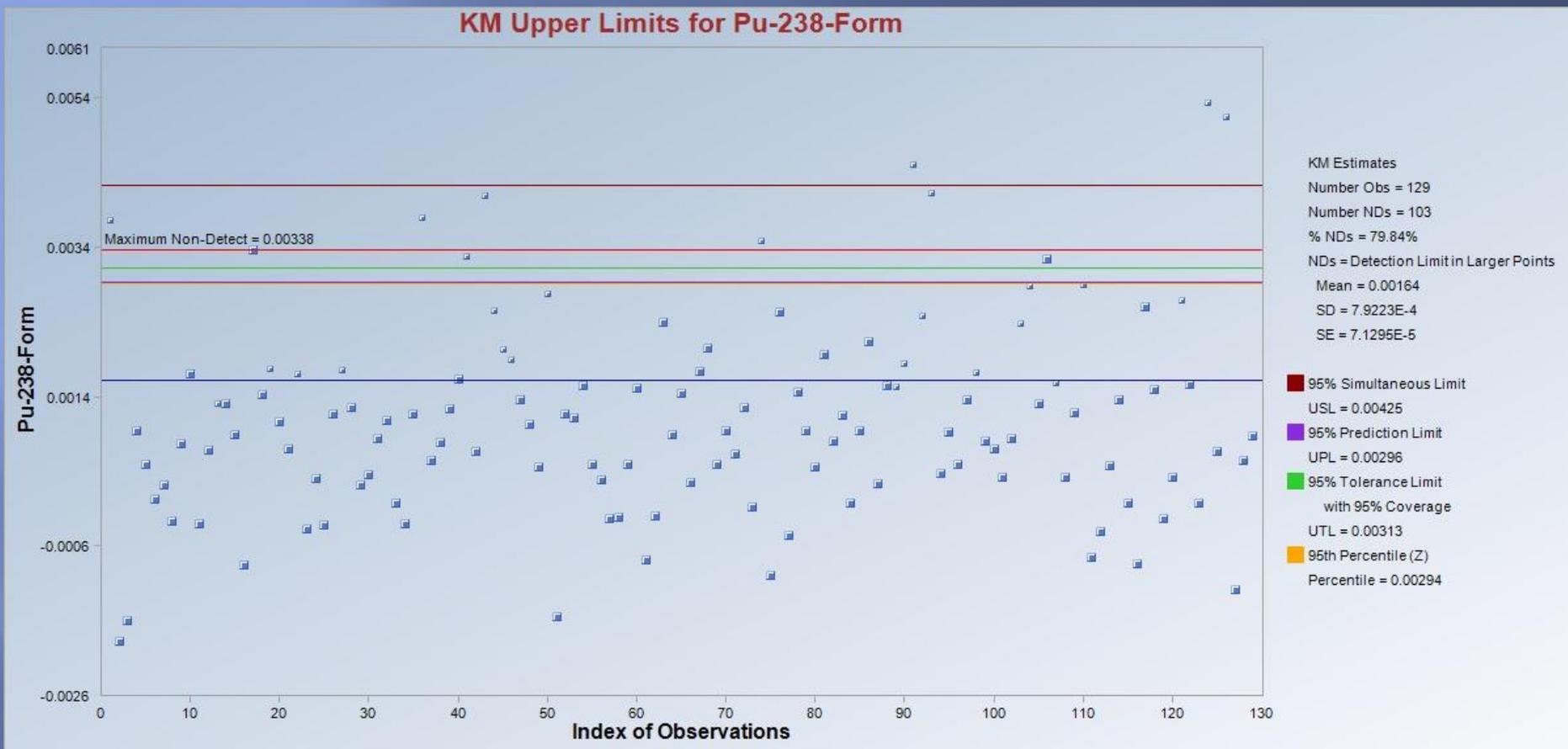


# Comparison of Key Radionuclides Background Threshold Values (BTVs) to Previous Background Study Results

Analyte	BTV 1 (pCi/g)	BTV 2 (pCi/g)	Previous Background Studies Value Ranges (pCi/g)
Cesium-137	1.93E-01 (.193) (Surface soil)	8.03E-03 (.00803) (Subsurface soil)	1.5E-02 to 2.1E-01 (.015 to .21)
Plutonium-238	4.25E-03 (.00425) (All results)		3.5E-03 to 1.3E-01 (.0035 to .13)
Plutonium-239/240	1.42E-02 (.0142) (Surface soil)	2.09E-03 (.00209) (Subsurface soil)	2.5E-03 to 1.5E-02 (.0025 to .015)
Strontium-90	7.50E-02 (.075) (Surface soil)	1.31E-02 (.013) (Subsurface soil)	5.0E-03 to 1.3E-01 (.005 to .13)
Uranium-235/236	1.22E-01 (.122)	1.25E-01 (.125)	2.5E-03 to 1.0E-01

# Plutonium-238

## BTV Estimates for Pu-238 Activity using All Data



**USL95 = 0.00425**

**Previous Background Values Range = 0.0035 – 0.13**



# Management Decisions for the Development of Look-Up Table Values

1. Use of the Highest BTV when separate values were calculated for Surface and Subsurface Soils
2. Use of Combined BTVs when separate values were calculated for each Geologic Formation
3. Use of Combined BTVs when separate values were calculated for each RBRA or Dataset
4. Potential Removal of Some Radionuclides from Further Consideration



# Schedule and Development of Look-Up Table

- ▣ The SSFL Radiological Background Study Report will be finalized after public review and after all stakeholder comments have been addressed.
- ▣ EPA will consult with DTSC during the development of the Look-Up Table.
- ▣ The Look-Up table will be available for public review and comment prior to finalization.

